

INNOVATIONS IN THE FIELD



Impact and Lessons from
the Young Adult Sectoral
Employment Project



JUNE 2025



JobsFirstNYC creates and advances solutions that break down barriers and transform the systems supporting young adults and their communities in the pursuit of economic opportunities. Our innovative approach to developing new partnership models has helped shape public policy, private philanthropic investments, and the practices of employers, colleges, workforce development service providers, high schools, and others. Over the last 18 years, JobsFirstNYC has worked with more than 200 organizations and institutions across New York City and State to build innovative solutions that connect young adults to economic opportunities.



The Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP) was a demonstration project to test how sector-based strategies, previously shown through research to directly benefit jobseekers in terms of earnings over time, could be most effectively adapted to better serve young adults.

The project took place between September 2013 and September 2018 and featured 11 partnerships (each of which brought together at least one community-based organization, one industry skills training entity, and at least one sector-specific employer or employer intermediary group) aimed at creating customized pathways to employment for young adults while providing concrete, measurable value to employers. By the end of the demonstration period, these partnerships helped connect 1,121 young people to jobs with New York City-area employers.

YASEP was the first initiative of its kind nationally to create effective, employer-driven programs specifically for unemployed and underemployed young adults using a sectoral approach. Today, seven of the eleven original partnerships remain strong.

INNOVATIONS IN THE FIELD

Innovations in the Field is a series showcasing JobsFirstNYC's pioneering projects and partnerships that drive economic mobility for young adults and the communities they call home. Through this series, we spotlight dynamic cross-sector collaborations for increasing economic opportunity. These initiatives highlight groundbreaking approaches for scaling effective solutions.

Note to readers: The affiliations and job titles of the individuals quoted in this paper are those held at the time of their contribution.

YASEP Partners

BronxWorks

C+C Management

CitiStorage

Complete Management Solutions

Comprehensive Youth Development

Con Edison

Cooperative Home Care Associates

CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College

CUNY Hostos Community College

Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

The Door

FEGS Health and Human Services

Green City Force

Hostos Community College

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement

The Knowledge House

L+M Development Partners

Montefiore Medical Center

New York Alliance for Careers in Healthcare

New York City Housing Authority's Office of Resident Economic Empowerment and Sustainability

Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation

Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute

Per Scholas

Phipps Neighborhoods

Queens Community House

Roundabout Theatre Company

St. Nicks Alliance

Sunnyside Community Services

Total Transportation Corp.

Wildlife Conservation Society

Letter from the CEO and President

JobsFirstNYC strives to bring practical value to the field by sharing what we learn from the projects and initiatives we have developed. Documenting the results of our work serves to lift progress and share success factors and lessons learned. It is through this transparency that we hope others can learn and adopt their own approaches to create multi-sector learning communities.

This paper builds on two previous publications: [*Innovations in the Field: The Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project*](#) and [*Optimizing Talent: The Promise and the Perils of Adapting Sectoral Strategies for Young Workers*](#).¹ It focuses on the results and systemic impacts of the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP), a demonstration project that ran from 2013 to 2018, as well as the learnings gleaned from this effort. Like all publications in JobsFirstNYC's *Innovations in the Field* series, this paper is intended to inform public and private funders, policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and employers of the potential of innovative practices for wider use.

Building on the lessons from earlier sectoral employment approaches with adult populations, YASEP sought to apply industry-specific workforce development approaches to address the needs of

young adults who are out of school and out of work in New York City. The project incorporated a results-based framework that sought to measure systemic change. It was the first instance in the country's workforce development system in which a Learning Community was built to support this effort, one that brought employers to the table from the outset.

During its five-year lifespan, YASEP achieved noteworthy results in connecting young people to training and employment and in providing valuable services to employers in various sectors of the New York City economy. As of September 2018, a total of 2,135 young people had been served through YASEP, of whom 1,121 acquired employment and 883 earned relevant industry credentials.² By 2020, more than 3,100 young adults had been served by the partnerships initiated under the YASEP model.³

As we continue to integrate the learnings from this important work into our practices and projects, we look forward to hearing from others about their approaches to young adult talent development and welcome questions and dialogue about our efforts.

Marjorie D. Parker
CEO and President
May 2025



Executive Summary

When the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP) launched in 2013, one in seven young adults in the United States was out of school and not working. YASEP began with a question—Could and should industry-based workforce training programs be adapted to better serve young adults?—at a time when not a single young-adult-only sectoral training program existed in the country. This publication outlines the process and results of the five-year YASEP initiative, sharing key learnings and scalable effective practices to inform workforce development efforts in New York City and nationwide.

YASEP'S MODEL

YASEP's collaborative model was tested through 11 partnerships, each consisting of at least one community-based organization and/or one industry skills training entity, and one or more sector-specific employers/employer intermediary groups. Supported by JobsFirstNYC, these partnerships worked together to design workforce solutions that were not only tailored to specific industries and employer needs but also deeply informed by the youth development principle of meeting young people “where they are.” The partners worked together over a five-year demonstration period to design, launch, and share learnings from each of their solutions.



YASEP'S PARTNERSHIPS

Under YASEP, 11 partnerships were created to develop tailored career pathways across high-demand sectors:

Creative Economy

- ▶ The Roundabout Theatre Company partnered with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and The Door to provide training for and access to careers in technical theater.

Green Economy

- ▶ Green City Force partnered with Con Edison, L+M Development Partners, C+C Management, and the New York City Housing Authority's Office of Resident Economic Empowerment and Sustainability to offer young adults career pathways into the sustainability sector.

Healthcare

- ▶ Comprehensive Youth Development and the City University of New York (CUNY) Borough of Manhattan Community College prepared students for careers in healthcare, enabling them to earn a certified medical assistant credential.
- ▶ Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute partnered with Cooperative Home Care Associates to train young adults for healthcare jobs.
- ▶ Phipps Neighborhoods collaborated with Hostos Community College and Montefiore Medical Center to prepare young adults for careers in allied healthcare.

Hospitality and Food Service

- ▶ Queens Connect (a coalition between Queens Community House, Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement, Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation, and Sunnyside Community Services) prepared participants for success in the food industry.
- ▶ The Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center partnered with employers to train young adults for careers in hospitality and food service.
- ▶ The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), working together with FEGS Health and Human Services and BronxWorks, developed a system for the training, hiring, retaining, and promoting of young adults from the Bronx in various job sectors—hospitality, food services, and retail—at WCS's Bronx Zoo.

Technology

- ▶ The Knowledge House created the Bronx Digital Pipeline with CUNY Hostos Community College and Per Scholas to develop pathways into cutting-edge technology jobs.
- ▶ Per Scholas and The Door launched TechBridge, a preparatory course to help 18- to 25-year-olds meet the admissions requirements for high-impact information technology training programs.

Transportation and Logistics

- ▶ Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation partnered with transportation employers to develop career pathways into the transportation sector with a robust career ladder, living wages, and union protections.

YASEP'S IMPACT FRAMEWORK: MEASURING RESULTS

To measure the demonstration project's achievements, YASEP partners worked with JobsFirstNYC to develop an impact framework that would track four levels of results: people, institutions, partnerships, and systems-level results.

Key wins achieved by YASEP partnerships between July 2014 (when the project's first cohort launched services) and September 2018 (when the demonstration period concluded) are outlined below:



PEOPLE

- ▶ **2,135** participants enrolled in industry training
- ▶ **1,535** participants completed training*
- ▶ **883** participants attained in-demand industry credentials
- ▶ **1,121** participants obtained employment

**This does not include 164 participants from cohorts 1 and 2 who were still in training at the time of reporting.*



INSTITUTIONS (EMPLOYERS)

- ▶ **100% of employers** reported an improved onboarding and training process, as well as reduced employee turnover and costs associated with turnover, as a direct result of their participation in their respective YASEP partnership
- ▶ **100% of employers** cited tangible services and resources made available to them through YASEP (such as updated labor market intelligence, exposure to business practices among contemporary or competitor organizations, and skills-building among supervisory staff overseeing younger frontline workers)
- ▶ **100% of partnerships** increased the number of unique employer partners within their sector or industry of focus



PARTNERSHIPS

- ▶ **10* of 11** partnerships (91%) sustained their program models throughout the duration of the demonstration project
- ▶ **10* of 11** partnerships (91%) incorporated their employer partners from the inception of their work to design, implement, and refine programs
- ▶ **11 of 11** partnerships (100%) expanded their strategic organizational relationships, adding new, complementary relationships to their work
- ▶ **11 of 11** partnerships (100%) formally incorporated and integrated the YASEP approach into their ongoing array of programs and services
- ▶ **11 of 11** partnerships (100%) utilized their YASEP programming to build new programs in the same sector or in new sectors of the economy

**WCS ultimately did not proceed with its planned partners; instead, it strengthened its internal onboarding and training protocols and refined its approach to connecting Bronx young adults to careers in hospitality, food services, and retail.*



SYSTEMS

- ▶ **11 of 11** partnerships (100%) created new mechanisms to benefit both the communities they serve and their employer partners. Examples include:
 - A transportation sector business intermediary in Cypress Hills/East New York
 - A customized training program to strengthen supervisors' effectiveness when supervising younger frontline workers in the largest healthcare employer in the Bronx
 - A tech-hub intermediary effort that connects tech companies with budding technology and small-business entrepreneurs in the South Bronx
 - A customized talent pipeline that ensures that younger workers have first-line access to technical theater jobs
 - A revamping of New York City's largest young adult employer, the Wildlife Conservation Society, to improve quality and conditions for young people working in seasonal-to-permanent customer service jobs
- ▶ **7 of 11** partnerships (64%) influenced employer practices in a way that had a measurable impact on job quality for key occupations. Examples include:
 - Increase in base wages for key occupations
 - Improvements in employee benefits and training
 - Company-level policy changes facilitating ease and flexibility of employee scheduling, directly benefiting young workers concurrently participating in training or education activities while employed
 - Increased employer contributions to training and onboarding expenses

YASEP'S LEGACY

Practitioners, employers, and funders alike have cited the value of learning through the work of YASEP and have noted that the youth employment field overall is in a different place in New York City because of the strengthening of sector-based training strategies. The success of YASEP had a large influence on publicly funded programs in New York City, including the Department of Youth and Community Development's Train & Earn initiative and the New York City Human Resources Administration's workforce training programs.

As noted by Roderick Jenkins of the New York Community Trust, "While many institutions have been working effectively on an employer engagement agenda for many years, YASEP was the first such effort to really spread best sectoral employment approaches and overall employer engagement and support strategies across the field in New York City specific to youth programming; a tide that has risen all boats." In addition to the influence that YASEP had on workforce organizations across the city, the initiative also fundamentally shaped JobsFirstNYC's own practices when it comes to designing, implementing, and evaluating new partnerships. Although the demonstration period ended in 2018, YASEP went on to inform several subsequent JobsFirstNYC initiatives, including Benchmarking for YASEP, SectorBOOST, the Transfer to Career Collaborative, and our Sector Networks. To this day, YASEP's model serves as a blueprint for how institutions can integrate sectoral strategies into youth workforce programs. More broadly, it demonstrates how rigorously designed, implemented, and evaluated approaches can better connect young adults to upwardly mobile careers and lives.

“While many institutions have been working effectively on an employer engagement agenda for many years, YASEP was the first such effort to really spread best sectoral employment approaches and overall employer engagement and support strategies across the field in New York City specific to youth programming; a tide that has risen all boats.”

—Roderick Jenkins, New York Community Trust





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